

Draft Response to Consultation on the Future of Trans European Transport Networks (TEN-T)

Background

The South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH) comprises the four local authorities in south west Wales, namely Carmarthenshire County Council, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Pembrokeshire County Council and the City and County of Swansea. SWWITCH was formed in 1998 in recognition of the need to work collaboratively to improve access and transport thereby facilitating economic development and improved quality of life.

Since 2002 SWWITCH, along with the other three transport consortia in Wales, has been financially supported by the Welsh Assembly Government in recognition of the value of working strategically on transport issues.

SWWITCH submitted a response to the TEN-T Green paper policy review in 2009

Introduction

SWWITCH has prepared and submitted a Regional Transport Plan for South West Wales (available from www.swwitch.net) which sets out long term objectives, a regional strategy and a five year programme of interventions to improve transport and access into, within and beyond the region. The Regional Transport Plan complements the Wales National Transport Plan which sets out the Assembly Government policy on transport and proposals for investment in the Trunk Road and rail networks as well as a range of other interventions.

SWWITCH region does have a number of major port facilities including those at Port Talbot, Swansea, Fishguard, Pembroke Dock and Milford Haven. All these facilities currently attract considerable traffic in terms of passengers, cars, freight and shipping. SWWITCH is an active Member of the Welsh Ports Group and remains committed to maximising the potential benefits of the ports to regional economic development and to the push for transition to sustainable freight and a low carbon economy in the medium to longer term.

SWWITCH does not propose to answer all the questions raised in the current consultation documents but does wish to submit for consideration a number of key points building on our submission to the 2009 consultation. This response is in line with that submitted by one of our constituent council (Pembrokeshire County Council) under separate cover.

SWWITCH response

SWWITCH believes it is critical that the South Wales TEN-T route (serving Port Talbot, Swansea and Pembrokeshire ports) becomes part of the priority axis or core route. This is important in terms of:

- Integration of modes, routes and member states

- Supporting the “Motorways of the Sea” concept and effective utilisation of resources
- Sustainability – the South Wales route would help to relieve the congested routes to and around Dublin
- Addressing peripherality – by spreading the benefits network enhancements would generate through increased inward investment and economic agglomeration opportunities
- Relief for congested routes - in the Midlands, on the A55 in North Wales and on routes to Dublin from Northern Ireland

The ports in South Wales are already significant in terms of passengers and freight, but have the capacity to play an even bigger part in the UK maritime economy if the infrastructure providing access to the ports was enhanced to support reliable access by road and rail.

The inclusion of the South Wales route as part of the priority or core network would support aspirations in the Wales Spatial Plan, the National Transport Plan and the Regional Transport Plan as well as economic development aspirations.

The future Comprehensive Network should ensure the accessibility of, and access to, the core network, and contribute to the internal cohesion of the Union and the effective implementation of the internal market. It should address a series of different needs. This is particularly relevant when dealing with the problem of peripherality.

Specific matters raised in the consultation

- The local plans of the nation and regions are the reference for land use planning.
- It would be appropriate to use the standards of the country of the transport network for technical and legal requirements on interoperability and safety. The development of the network should also reflect capacity bottlenecks where diminishing rates of return for transport investment (eg A55 Holyhead to Dublin route) mean that priority is better given to under utilised sections of the TEN-T Network (eg M4/A40 South Wales corridor)
- The focus in TEN-T should be on reducing peripherality with rail and maritime networks increasingly important as the distances become longer.
- A principal focus of TEN-T should be to reduce transport costs within the EU and thereby reduce barriers to inter member trade.
- Multimodality, including intermodal links and facilities for co-modal and/or combined transport, is particularly relevant at ports where maritime, rail and road modes often coalesce. Note the comments on the four elements below:
 - ❖ *Interconnectivity and network optimisation:* a refocus is needed from very large projects to localised improvements where completing missing links in the network would provide better value for money
 - ❖ *Interoperability and improved efficiency of all modes of transport:* increase focus on utilising existing capacity rather than building new infrastructure will often be more cost effective.
 - ❖ *Minimisation of investment, maintenance and operational costs, while nevertheless meeting the relevant policy objectives and the criteria*

below in a balanced way: This implies there should be a focus on small schemes to tackle localised gaps or bottlenecks in the network

- ❖ *Gateway ports, intercontinental hub ports and airports, connecting the EU with the outside world, and the most important inland ports and freight terminals:* Connections to Port Talbot, Swansea, Pembroke Dock, Fishguard and Milford Haven are key. The 5 ports share common TEN-T and Trunk Road access corridor M4/A48/A40(A477)